

Lottery

I.

A wrinkled piece of thin paper in my hand,  
the weight of a receipt, with the same expected shelf-life.

There's a line at the convenience store, each  
blue-jeaned customer with two-day stubble,

or a pair of pants closing at the belly-button.  
And there's always a story on the news

about the man from Oklahoma who  
won big, kept working at his job,

and said he was looking forward to retirement.  
I dreamt of money angels on grass,

hands the metallic odor of cash,  
my heart with the hunger-strike bliss

accompanying me right before death—  
and then I blacked out.

II.

I left two beer bottles on the dresser,  
because I didn't want to walk them to the trash

and I enjoyed the message it sent.  
The ink from receipts and lottery tickets gives you cancer.

I threw the ticket away before I could find out I lost,  
added another beer to the collection, lied

on my side, and ran my hand up my leg.  
Was there a lump or was I a hypochondriac?

Leave it to hope, no matter how fantastic,  
unhealthy, unrealistic, sickeningly material,

selfishly sexual, or stubbornly resistant  
to sneak up and kill you. Hope and commerce.

There's a black-and-white dog that's taken  
up residence at the edge of my driveway.

He sits there, moving only if a car pulls in or pulls out.  
Everyone in my family tries to shoo him off,

but I let him stay, with his head on the concrete,  
watching kids hop off buses, hoping for nothing,

content to be alone,  
keeping watch over a home that isn't his.

theredbackpack.tumblr.com